

REFORM IN NEW-YORK CITY.



ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF NEW-YORK

BY THE

OF NEW-YORK.



TOGETHER WITH

Resolutions of Confidence and Thanks

TENDERED TO THE

Officers of the Citizens' Association,

ADOPTED AT A GENERAL MEETING.



NEW-YORK

PUBLISHED BY THE CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION,
MAY 6, 1870.

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CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW-YORK,)
No. 813 BROADWAY, April 26, 1870.)

At a general meeting of the Citizens' Association, held April 26, 1870, at No. 813 Broadway, the following address to the citizens of New-York was unanimously adopted, and ordered to be published, together with the following resolutions :

TO THE CITIZENS OF NEW-YORK :

Important changes having been made by the Legislature during the present session in the local Government of the City of New-York, affecting deeply the interests of the people, the Citizens' Association deems a brief explanation of those changes proper at the present time.

Reorganisation.

1. A Board of Aldermen to be elected upon a general ticket from the City at large on May 17 next, will supersede the present Board of Aldermen elected from districts.

2. A Board of Assistant Aldermen, to consist of one person chosen from each of the regular Assembly Districts, will supersede the present Board selected from special Aldermanic Districts.

3. The Street Commissioner's Department and the Croton Aqueduct Board are consolidated into a Department of Public Works, under the charge of one person as Commissioner of Public Works.

4. A new department, called the Department of Docks, is created, to have sole charge of the wharves and piers and to build new and commodious dock structures.

5. The Boards of Police, Fire and Health, are withdrawn from their extended Metropolitan jurisdiction and resolved into local departments without the loss of any powers in respect of this City.

6. The separate Board of Supervisors for the County of New-York is abolished, and the powers of Supervisors conferred on the Board of Aldermen.

7. The Department of Finance is placed under a Comptroller, to be appointed instead of being elected.

8. All powers by which the Governor or other State authority can appoint or remove City officers are abolished, and all such officers are appointed by the Mayor.

9. The power to hear and determine charges of malfeasance against all City officers, is vested in the Court of Common Pleas in full bench.

10. The Mayor may bring to trial on charges any City officer accused of malfeasance. If the charges be sustained by the Court the office of the respondent becomes vacant.

11. The Board of Aldermen may bring the Mayor to trial for alleged malfeasance. If the charges be sustained his office becomes vacant.

12. The Board of Aldermen can appropriate money generally only by a three-fourths vote of all the members; and can appropriate money for celebrations, &c., only by a four-fifths vote; and can make extra allowances of money only by a unanimous vote. These restrictions being far more rigorous than any heretofore existing.

13. The completion of the work on the new County Court-house is removed from the Board of Supervisors and placed in the hands of four practical persons, to be appointed by the Mayor.

The Citizens' Association.

These are the principal changes made in our local Government. Nearly all of them are reforms which have been asked for by our citizens through the Citizens' Association for the past six years. The Citizens' Association was organized Dec. 12, 1863. It is, and always has been, a thoroughly non-partisan body, composed of men of every shade of political opinion, acting in concert to secure one end—honest, efficient and economical government for New-York. For nearly seven years it has unceasingly and vigorously pursued its course and performed its work. Bitter attacks or censure have never for a moment turned it aside from its duty. It has labored every year to re-

duce the annual tax levies, and the result is shown in the fact that the taxes of the City are now lower than in any other large city in this country, being about one per cent. on the actual value of property. It has also labored every year to secure such changes in our local Government as would best secure economy and efficiency. The changes it sought were as follows :

The Mayor's Powers.

1. The appointment of all heads of departments by the Mayor. [Recommended by the Citizens' Association to the Constitutional Convention in 1867. Now adopted by the new Charter.]

The benefits secured by this are as follows: The Mayor being responsible for the efficiency of his appointees, selects practical men for heads of departments, and mere local political manipulators are excluded. The heads of departments not being elected, and having no minor political adherents to reward, appoint practical clerks in all the offices. The departments thus become business establishments with efficient incumbents, instead of mere electioneering machines and nurseries for political favorites. Each head of department not being dependent on politics, but good behavior, for his office, will study to economize the public funds and serve the public interests.

Board of Public Works.

2. The consolidation of the Street Department and the Croton Board, together with the building functions of the Supervisors, in one Board, to be called the Board of Public Works. [Urged by the Citizens' Association in proposed acts presented to the Legislature in 1866 and 1867. Now adopted by the new Charter and the act abolishing the Board of Supervisors.]

The advantages of this measure are, that it gives the whole jurisdiction over our street-paving, flagging, sewerage, water-pipes, public buildings, &c., &c., to one head, instead of leaving it to two conflicting authorities. It cuts off a fruitful source of speculation, formerly practiced by collusion between contractors from the two independent departments, and lessens the expense of keeping up two Boards. It makes one man responsible before the people in such a manner that he cannot escape the consequences of neglect, malfeasance or inefficiency, and enables reform to be effected by one removal and one re-appointment in the whole range of public works.

Wharves and Piers.

3. The creation of a separate Board to have charge of all the wharves, piers and water front. [Urged upon the Legislature by the Citizens' Association in

the years 1866, 1867, 1868 and 1869. Now adopted in the new Charter and the Tax Levy of this year.]

The benefits to flow from this measure may be briefly summed up. They are: The institution of a vigorous, comprehensive and progressive policy by the Government in relation to our docks, by which the present decaying wooden structures will be replaced by permanent, elegant and commodious wharves, at once an ornament to our harbor, an inducement to commerce and a needed improvement to the health of the city. The cost of these structures, though large and proportioned to the great benefits to be gained, will not really fall upon our people. The wharfage to be collected will pay both interest and principal of the bonds to be issued. It is simply an intelligent administration of our great wharf estate, which is inaugurated by this change—an administration which, like the original outlay for the Croton water, will pay for itself, and like the cost of the Central Park, will be an investment which will raise the value of our city property a hundred-fold.

The Aldermen.

4. A Board of Aldermen, elected by the city at large. [Recommended to the Constitutional Convention in 1867 by the Citizens' Association. Now adopted by the new Charter.]

The advantage of such a Board is, that every member of it being voted upon by every elector, the can-

didates must be a better class of citizens, who will not attempt the ruinous pavement expenditures, the attacks on private property, the waste of money, and the various petty inflictions which the former Boards practiced in order to supply the wants of rapacious local politicians, whose obscurity and limited constituency almost screened them from investigation.

The Supervisors.

5. The abolition of the Board of Supervisors, and vesting their powers in the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor. [Recommended to the Constitutional Convention by the Citizens' Association, and now adopted by the act abolishing the Board of Supervisors.]

This saves the expense of a separate government and separate legislation for a territory which is alike for the City and County, and enables our citizens, by the exercise of a single act of vigilance to watch both the City and the County Government, as it is exercised in one body. The Mayor of the City is thus also made responsible for the County Government, and his character, experience and position are put in the scale to weigh in favor of good government.

Police, Fire and Health.

6. The creation of separate Boards to have charge of the Police, the Fire and the Health Departments.

[The Fire Board was instituted in 1865, and the Health Board in 1866, at the instance of the Citizens' Association, as Departments separate from the other municipal bodies. Now, by the new Charter, these Boards are continued as separate, with their full powers, only restricted to this city.]

The inestimable blessings conferred upon our citizens in the protection of life, property and health, by these three great Departments, are too well-known to need explanation at this day. Years have tested their efficiency and the wisdom which instituted them and guided their acts. They now act in harmony with a centralized and responsible local Government.

New Court House.

7. The appointment of a separate committee to complete the work upon the new Court-house. [Urged upon the Legislature by the Citizens' Association as far back as 1866. Now adopted by the Tax Levy of this year.]

The fact that this plan was urged four years ago, and that the edifice is not yet finished, is sufficient reason for its final adoption. The four men to whom it is now to be confided will have the attention of the whole county directed to their acts, and they have every inducement which undivided responsibility and personal reputation can furnish to make a speedy end of this necessary work. A standing reproach to

our county will now pass away, together with the vitiated system under which it has so long existed.

Impeachment.

8. The institution of a local judicial tribunal, to which resort can be had for relief from official wrongdoing. [Urged upon the Legislature for several years past by the Citizens' Association, in different forms. Now adopted by the new Charter.]

Heretofore the Governor or Legislature alone could remove incompetent or wasteful officials. But this power was so remote and diffuse as to be entirely freed from responsibility for prompt or conscientious action upon the momentous questions involved. Now a safe and judicious means of impeachment is provided to remedy local abuses.

Reform Obtained.

It will thus be seen that the great ends of local reform, for which the Citizens' Association has toiled through every adverse circumstance, have been accomplished, and that our city is, so far as its system of government is concerned, redeemed from the irresponsibility into which it had fallen, and had been so long suffered to remain. It will be seen that the labor of regeneration, although apparently slow in progress, and carried on against every species of obstruction and attack, has achieved no ordinary triumph, and has by

its inherent strength and merit won to the side of reform and good government the great political party by which the government of this Metropolis is administered. The Citizens' Association recognizing no party as a party in questions of municipal reform, has co-operated with every power that promised the attainment of a pure government. It has thus happened that at times it has been accused of working in the Republican interests, and at others of working in the Democratic interests: the truth being that it worked at all times simply in the interest of good government, and it does not now hesitate to appeal to the people of the City and State of New-York to say whether its course has not been so directed that the administration of local affairs is in all respects vastly improved since the organization of the Association in 1863.

The Good Work to Continue.

The Association intends to carry on its work in the future with the same energy and zeal it has shown in the past. The government of the city must be perfected in all its details, and, above all, the good which has already been obtained, must be carefully guarded. New-York cannot afford to lose these dearly bought advantages by supineness and neglect. Unceasing vigilance must insure her against retrograding in her career of improvement: and the Association does not hesitate to promise that if the energies of the citizens are bent to attaining in their government—first, a

thorough efficiency: second, economy of expenditures: third, the wisest method of local expansion and improvement—**New-York City** will reach such a height of prosperity and reputation as the world has never seen. Already a sweeping reform in the management of those great works—the State Canals—promises the acquisition of enormous traffic and untold riches to the whole State and to this Metropolis. The projected system of new Docks is come to maturity in time to accommodate an immense inland and foreign commerce. These reforms and the natural advantages of our city are such as to render the prospects of the future bright in results yet to be achieved.

The Citizens' Association reviewing the past with its progress and achievements, and looking forward to the work yet to be done, and the results yet to be secured, cannot stand still or draw back from the mission assigned to it. It feels more than ever the momentous importance of its work, and the grand consequences involved in its success. It is true that in one sense its field is local and limited. Its aim is **City Reform** and **City Improvement**. But in another view the field expands to the dimensions of an Empire, and the results of its triumph reach over States and Continents.

Future of New-York.

New-York is not merely a populous city; it is a grand seminary of ideas, examples and influences. Its commerce binds it to all the world; its arts and

sciences, its mechanics, its industry, its grand enterprises, its enormous wealth, magnificent charities, its vast moral influence—all these give it a name and power unequalled by any community in any other nation; and if it is now a power and model of progress, with all its faults, what a splendor will it exhibit when freed from the influences of bad government—when wise and high-minded men fill its offices and devote their energies to the development of its resources, and the improvement of its vast natural and moral advantages. If this Metropolis had been created and located on purpose to show how great it is possible for a city to become, no better choice could have been made. Washed on three sides by rivers, with a bay capable of holding the commercial navies of the world, with every facility for cleanliness, health and comfort, with innumerable outlets and communications with all sections of the Union, and all nations of the earth: with attractions drawing to it men of enterprise and industry from all countries and climes, it may in a few years, if wisely governed and developed, become the greatest of cities. What a grand demonstration of the enterprise, wealth and skill of her people! What a proof of the genial power of free institutions might be shown in the broad and paved thoroughfares, extending from the East to the North River, and from the Battery to Harlem; massive docks, piers and warehouses around its whole front, for the commerce of the world; beautiful parks; fountains for ornaments, and for the thirsty wayfarer: public gardens and places

of amusement for the people's use and recreation: spacious and beautiful markets, located for public convenience: streets carefully graded and paved, swept and cleaned daily: comfortable, clean and cheap public conveyances, so that the poorest might enjoy rapid transit to and from every section. Such a city the Citizens' Association desires New-York to become.

Duty of our Citizens.

The Association would now earnestly appeal to every citizen to take an active part and interest in our local government. Great results are bound up in establishing wise and efficient government on this island. That this may be obtained has been demonstrated. In order to complete the work our merchants and mechanics have only to discharge the duties they owe to each other and to the public. A new state of things has been inaugurated. The Democratic leaders are pledged to good government and progress, and the Association has full confidence that these pledges will be kept. Let us encourage and strengthen the hands of every man who is willing to do his duty. It was feared by many, when the present session of the Legislature opened, that our local government would not be improved: but happily these fears have not been realized. On the contrary, most satisfactory changes have been inaugurated, encouraging the hope of results most beneficial to our city.

Vote of Confidence by the Members of the Citizens' Association in the Officers of the Association.

After the consideration of the foregoing address, the following were unanimously adopted:

Resolutions.

WHEREAS, the members of the Citizens' Association, in general meeting, have caused to appear the whole course of the management of the organization from its foundation, and the policy and acts of its officers in all matters relating to their duties and the objects of the Association; and it has been found that the efforts of the Association have been properly directed by its said officers, who have diligently, ably and faithfully labored to effect its great ends, and have achieved substantial and unequivocal success, resulting in great good to our people; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That we have full faith and confidence in the said officers of the Association; that we indorse their policy and approve their course, and thank them for the zeal, ability and wisdom with which they have discharged their trusts; and

RESOLVED, That the direction of the affairs and purposes of the Association be continued unaltered in the future; and further

RESOLVED, That the Address, as adopted, together with these Resolutions, be published in the Press for the information of the people of this city, and be printed for general circulation as well as for future reference and preservation.

(Signed.)

JAMES BROWN,
EDWIN HOYLE,
JOHN JACOB ASTOR,
JACOB D. VERMILYER,
CHARLES TRACY

MOSES TAYLOR,
JOHN TAYLOR JOHNSTON,
STEWART BROWN,
WILLIAM B. ASTOR,
JONATHAN STURGES.

JOHN DAVID WOLFE,
 JOHN A. WEEKS,
 SAMUEL SLOAN,
 JAMES F. DE PEYSTER,
 JOHN Q. JONES,
 JAMES STOKES,
 WILLARD PARKER,
 MURRAY HOFFMAN,
 HOWARD POTTER,
 JAMES M. BROWN,
 BENJAMIN H. HUTTON,
 CYRUS CURTISS,
 BARNET L. SOLOMON,
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 DAVID STEWART,
 JOSEPH L. SPOFFORD,
 H. C. FAHNESTOCK,
 WILLIAM OOTHOUT,
 HENRY M. TABER,
 WILLIAM H. FOGG,
 CHARLES N. TALBOT,
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 SAMUEL W. BARNARD,
 RICHARD MORTIMER,
 JOHN BRIDGE,
 HENRY RALL,
 A. ROBERTSON WALSH,
 JAMES STUART,
 SAMUEL C. THOMPSON,
 DANIEL PARISH,
 HENRY IVISON,
 MOSES G. BALDWIN,
 HENRY R. TERBELL,
 JOHN FALCONER,
 WILLIAM MENZIES,
 DAVID DOWS,
 J. PIERPONT MORGAN,
 JOHN P. PAULSON,
 ADAM NORRIE,
 GEORGE H. POTTS,
 HARRIS COLT,
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 F. W. G. BELLOWES,
 JOHN S. WILLIAMS,
 J. M. HALSTED,
 HANS REES,
 WM. WOOD,
 SALEM H. WALES,
 ERASTUS TITUS,
 WASHINGTON R. VERMILYE,
 CHARLES LAXIER,
 MORRIS K. JESUP,
 RICHARD BERRY,
 FREDERICK D. TAPPEN,
 ANSON PHELPS STOKES,
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WILLIAM A. BOOTH,
 WILLIAM E. DODGE,
 H. B. CLAFLIN,
 SHEPHERD KNAPP,
 A. R. WETMORE,
 PAUL X. SPOFFORD,
 JEREMIAH P. ROBINSON,
 THEODORE W. RILEY,
 JAS. BOORMAN JOHNSTON,
 PETER GILSEY,
 WILLIAM H. LEE,
 WILLIAM T. BLODGETT,
 ROBERT COLGATE,
 WILLIAM BLOODGOOD,
 GOULD HOYT,
 FREDERIC DE PEYSTER,
 WM. ALEXANDER SMITH,
 HENRY A. BURR,
 WILLIAM H. JACKSON,
 JOSEPH STUART,
 WILLIAM H. GUION,
 JAMES M. CONSTABLE,
 JOSEPH W. ALSOP,
 SETH B. HUNT,
 WILLIAM SLOANE,
 THOMAS BARRON,
 COURTLANDT PALMER,
 ROBERT CAMPBELL,
 ISAAC SHERMAN,
 ISAAC N. PHELPS,
 ALBERT CLARK,
 JOHN SLOANE,
 JOHN WARREN,
 JOHN MCKESSON,
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 GEORGE CABOT WARD,
 HENRY G. MARQUAND,
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 JOHN D. MAIRS,
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 SIMON D. VISSER,
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 WILLIAM L. JENKINS,
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 J. H. GAUTHIER,

HULL CLARK,
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 THEODORE GILMAN,

JAMES COLLIER,
 THOS. J. POPE,
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 GEORGE F. BAKER,
 ANDREW GILSEY,
 WILLIAM E. TREADWELL,
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 ANTHONY HALSEY,
 E. ANTHONY,
 J. B. OGDEN,
 MADISON M. CALER,
 E. D. MOULTON,
 L. J. N. STARK,
 HUGH W. SHOTWELL,
 A. L. SWEET,
 A. D. LADD,
 JOHN M. TOMPKINS,
 SAMUEL B. YOUNG,
 PHILIP W. VERPLANCK,
 A. E. MASTERS,
 GEO. M. WELD,
 JAMES W. CALDWELL,
 CLAUDIUS B. CONANT,
 ENSIGN O. BEALE,
 HENRY MEYER,
 CALVIN B. LOCKWOOD,
 H. M. SANDERSON.

We certify the foregoing to be a correct copy of
 the original Address and Resolutions, with the origi-
 nal signatures attached, which are on file in the Rooms
 of the Citizens' Association, No. 813 Broadway, in
 the City of New-York.

Officers
of the
Association.

PETER COOPER,
President.
 WILLIAM M. VERMILYE,
Treasurer.
 NATHANIEL SANDS,
Chairman of the Ex. Committee.
 JOSEPH F. DALY,
Counsel.
 RICHARD M. HENRY,
Secretary.

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